

NEWS



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11-17-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

If you, or someone you know, have been thinking about quitting smoking, now's a good time to kick the habit. In fact, November 17 marks the 36th annual Great American Smokeout. The American Cancer Society, and many others across the nation, uses this date to encourage smokers to take a day off from smoking and start making their plan to quit for good. Doing so will help smokers take that critical first step toward a healthier life – one with reduced risk of cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and other smoking related illnesses.

Despite what we know about the deadly risks of smoking and the hazards of second-hand smoke, people continue to smoke and new smokers start every day. Remarkably, 45 million Americans still smoke cigarettes. Today, smokers don't have to go it alone – they have support from people around the nation who also want to quit smoking. The Great American Smokeout gives us a day to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking and provide important smoking cessation information and encouragement.

So why quit? Smoking is cool; it's glamorous - at least that's what we see in the advertisements and movies, right? Wrong! Tobacco is anything but cool – it is the single largest cause of preventable death. According to the American Cancer Society, tobacco causes more deaths each year than alcohol, illicit drugs, homicide, suicide, car accidents, fire, and AIDS combined. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. for both men and women. Tobacco use also causes an increased risk for cancer of the mouth, lips, nose and sinuses, voice box, throat, esophagus, stomach, and other areas. As if that weren't enough – smoking yellows teeth and fingers, leaves the smoker smelling badly, and makes the heart and lungs work harder.

To help get the word out about the Great American Smokeout and the dangers of smoking, the visual arts academy students at Orange/Ulster BOCES Career and Technical Education Center participated in the 18th annual awareness poster contest sponsored by the Orange County Department of Health and POW'R Against Tobacco. The theme of this year's contest "If Tobacco Ads Told the Truth" was intended to encourage consumers to be aware of how tobacco ads don't tell the whole story, leaving out the risks involved with using their product. It is hoped that by participating in this contest, understanding the risks of tobacco, and sharing their artwork with their fellow students and families, young people might think twice before lighting up a cigarette.

In her comments at the poster contest unveiling at BOCES, Meghan DuBois O'Connor from POW'R explained tobacco advertising in a way that I'd never considered before – tobacco companies use cigarette advertising to recruit replacement smokers, especially young people, to make up for the smokers that have died off. It is likely the only widely available product on the market that when used as intended will actually kill the user. Wow – that's a pretty powerful message!

And if all that isn't enough to get you to quit or to convince a loved one that now's the time – think about the savings. At nearly \$10 for a pack of cigarettes, the money one could save by quitting could add up quickly!

To learn more about free smoking cessation programs in Orange County, visit the Healthy Orange website at www.healthyorange.com or call 568-5226. Why wait another day?

Until next week, wishing you good health and happiness,

Edward A. Diana, County Executive